

Chairman Snowe and Senator Kerry, it is an honor and a privilege for me to come before the Committee today to introduce Mr. Thorson.

As you both know, I have worked very hard to strengthen the oversight role of the inspectors general (IG) throughout the government.

The IG's are our first-line of defense against fraud, waste and abuse in the government. We depend on them to ensure that every tax dollar spent is spent according to law. And when that doesn't happen, we in Congress need to know about it and take corrective action.

As you know so well, being an IG is a tough job. And when the IG's aren't doing their job, we need to know about that, too. Congress must "watch the watchdogs." We need to keep a sharp eye on the IG's to make sure they are meeting their responsibilities under the IG Act.

What I am saying, Chairman Snowe is this: it takes a very special person to be a good IG. Above all else, an IG must have integrity and courage.

IG's must always be independent. They must always set an example of excellence in their personal conduct.

IG's must meet high standards, indeed.

Chairman Snowe and Senator Kerry, Mr. Thorson meets those standards.

Mr. Thorson has an outstanding reputation for being a man of integrity and courage.

Mr. Thorson has the requisite knowledge, experience and character to be the IG at the Small Business Administration.

He has senior-level management experience in the government, having served as an Assistant and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force from 1985 to 1989.

He has executive level experience in the private sector as well, where he was president of his own company that operated a fleet of corporate jet aircraft.

His investigative credentials are impressive.

In 1997-1998, Mr. Thorson was the Chief Investigator for the Senate Finance Committee. He led the investigation into the abusive tactics of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). His findings and recommendations formed the foundation for an excellent set of hearings. The revelations that surfaced at those hearings helped to generate national support for IRS reform and corrective legislation that followed.

From 1995 to 1997, Mr. Thorson was Chief Investigator for the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Prior to that, 1990 to 1995, he served as the lead defense investigator for the House Committee on Government Operations.

During the timeframe 1993 to 1997, I became directly involved in at least three of Mr. Thorson's investigations and testified at hearings on those matters.

At the time, I remember being so impressed with the very professional way Mr. Thorson conducted investigations - especially the investigation involving the Air Force C-17 contract issue. On the C-17 investigation, he worked in close concert with the Defense Department IG. That kind of cooperation was in keeping with the true spirit of the IG Act, and Mr. Thorson is the one who made it happen.

On March 17, 1993, the IG presented a devastating report to the House Committee on the “backdoor bailout” of the C-17 contract. I was there and remember it well. I was a witness and testified at the hearing. After complimenting the Chairman, Mr. Thorson, and the IG for working together to produce a “superb piece of work,” the record shows that I then said: “this is oversight and investigations at its best.” Those words were meant for Mr. Thorson.

Chairman Snowe, I know what Mr. Thorson is capable of doing.....And I feel confident that he can do what IG's are supposed to do and do it very well.

In my book, he has passed the IG test with flying colors.

Chairman Snowe, I am confident in Mr. Thorson's ability to be impartial and independent, to be objective and thorough and above all to be fair.

In closing, I would like to mention one issue.

I know there have been some tough questions about some of Mr. Thorson's investigative activities. On that score, I would say this: my own experience has taught me that hard-hitting investigations always generate friction and criticism - always. It goes with the territory. It is a fact of life in that line of work.

I came here this afternoon to stand before you with Mr. Thorson because I believe he has what it takes to be a top-notch IG.

Thank you.